

# Mental pleasure/pain more intense and longer lasting than physical pleasure/pain

Post by "Pacatus" of December 13, 2023 at 5:47 PM

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I think constantly in terms of "we" rather than "me". And, in the consideration of "we" I need to ask who would pay the price if I think only of me. So, for example, when practicing medicine I very clearly knew the agenda was to do what was appropriate for the patient, and not just beneficial to my pleasure.

So, are you really thinking in terms of "we" - which, by definition, also includes you (because "we" is relational)? Or are you saying that you think "constantly" only of others - and not yourself at all? (Rhetorical question: I don't think you're saying that at all.)

Does caring for others by practicing medicine (as opposed to practicing medicine just to enrich yourself) cause you to feel generally dissatisfied with your life? Does it displease you? I doubt it. Do mutually self-affirming and caring (loving) relationships bother you because the "we" includes you and your pleasure, as well as that of the other? I doubt it. Do you enjoy loving the people you love in those "we" relationships? I suspect so.

Epicurus extolled friendship. Friendship is a "we" relation. I think it's foolish (and delusive) to imagine we can extend that "we relation" without bounds. Even if we're thinking globally, we still act locally (and no one has a god's-eye "view from nowhere") - or else we likely end up flailing impotently. You may have a concern for all humanity, but you treat one patient at a time. But I also think it's foolish to try to limit our concerns (for some of the "public goods" reasons I alluded to) to our own little band. So, we do recognize that we are necessarily and inescapably part of larger social "we" relations. And we inescapably end up weighing the effects of our choices on our nearer "we's" relative to the larger "we's". (In your profession, maybe the word "triage" is sometimes applicable?)

Although ideals and other abstractions (like "virtue") can be seductive, all our choices are always concrete:

"When it comes to shaping one's personal behavior, all the rules of morality, as precise as they may be, remain abstract in the face of the infinite complexity of the concrete."

—Hans Urs von Balthasar, Roman Catholic theologian

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Am I virtuous? I don't know. Am I less kind and compassionate in my behavior than when I was steeped in idealist Christian/Kantian virtue-morality? It doesn't seem so. Am I less concerned about "social justice" issues? I don't think so (though, in my elder years, I am less directly active). Do I care if anyone thinks I'm not sufficiently virtuous/righteous/good? Not really. I just don't think in those terms anymore. Do I "feel good" about my choices after (Hemingway)? Sometimes yes, sometimes no; when "no," I try to ask why and amend - and do better next time. But that "feeling good" just *is* pleasure. Call it conscience if you wish; the feeling is the guide, the rationales (important as they are) come after.

Like [TauPhi](#) , I'm just a guy on the internet drawing on Epicurean philosophy - as best I understand it - to inform my own choices. I may understand it differently tomorrow. In the end, Epicurus - like all the Hellenistic schools - thought of philosophy as a process of therapy, not just an intellectual exercise.